(a) whether it is a fact that pork processing project is being established at Medzifema, Nagaland;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the population of pork is decreasing in the country;

(c) if so, what are the reasons to permit the establishment, financing and encouraging such big projects; and

(d) what steps are taken to stop such cruel slaughtering?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. As per Animal Husbandry Statistics (1999) the pig population is increasing.

(c) Such a project has been assisted in order to meet the growing demand for hygienic and better quality pork.

(d) The pork project at Medzifema uses stunning before actual slaughtering which is a more scientific process.

Pruning of negative list of imports

2567. SHRI CHO S. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken to protect the local industries in the new Import-Export Policy being formulated by Government;

(b) whether it is a fact that Government are planning to reduce the number of items from the negative list of imports;

(c) if so, whether it will open the floodgates for any importer in the country to import thus affecting the local units;

(d) whether it will result in free outflow of foreign exchange from the country; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (e) India has been following a continuous policy of removal of restrictions on imports since 1991. Tariff

line-wise import policy was first announced on 31.3.1996. As on that date, import of 6161 tariff lines (at 10 digit level) out of the total number of 10202 tariff lines (at 10 digit level) were free. Import restrictions on 488 tariff lines (at 10 digit level) were removed during the period 1.4.96 to 31.3.97. Another 391 tariff lines (at 8 digit level) were freed during the period 1.4.97 to 13.4.98 and 894 tariff lines (at 8 digit level) were freed on 1.4.99. Quantitative restrictions on 714 items were removed on 31.03.2000 and import restrictions on the balance 715 items are to be removed by 31.03.2001.

The removal of Quantitative Restrictions, has not altered the growth rate of imports. The growth in imports was 15.3% in 1993-94, 23.1% in 1994-95 and 36.4% in 1995-96. The growth rate of imports came down to 13.2% in 1996-97, 11% in 1997-98, 14.2% in 1998-99, 13.6% in 1999-2000 and 8.95% during the first nine months of 2000-2001. If non oil imports are taken into consideration, the imports during the first nine months of this year, in fact, registered negative growth of 8.31%. Going by these trends, there seems to be no cause for apprehending any adverse impact of removal of quantitative restrictions on the balance of payments.

The imports are being closely monitored and the Government is determined to ensure through appropriate use of tariff and other measures that imports do not cause any serious injury or detriment to domestic producers. Some of the steps taken towards that end are as follows:

(i) Customs duties on a number of agricultural and other products have been increased;

(ii) Preliminary antidumping duties have been imposed on import of battery cells and sports shoes from China;

(iii) Import of consumer goods have been made subject to mandatory labelling requirements;

(iv) Import of 131 product have been made subject to adherence of mandatory Indian Quality Standards; and

(v) Counter vailing duty equivalent to the excise duty is proposed to be imposed on import of alcoholic beverages.

Besides, an Inter-ministerial Group, under the Chairmanship of Commerce Secretary, is examining the likely impact of QR removal on domestic producers to suggest suitable measures to be taken by the Government. The Group is likely to submit its final recommendations before March 31, 2001.